The Christians Blessed CHOICE.

THE CHRISTIANS BLESSED CHOICE.

OR,

The Godly Mans Resolution to cleave fast to God and his Truth, notwithstanding Trials, Troubles, and Persecutions.

Very seasonable for these times.

Josh. 24. 15. *As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord.*

Rom. 8. 18. *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in us.*

By *J. H.* A Servant of Jesus Christ.

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THE CHRISTIANS BLESSED CHOICE.

Heb. 11. 25, 26.

Chuſing rather to ſuffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleaſures of Sin for a Seaſon: Eſteeming the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the Honours in *Ægypt*; For he had reſpect to the Recompence of the reward.

IN this Chapter, Beloved, we find the Bleſſed Apoſtle opening and applying the Doctrine of Faith, having firſt aſſured them, that he and the Reſt of Chriſts Diſciples

were in the number of those who did believe to the Saving of their Souls. Having told them in the 38 Verse of the foregoing Chapter, that the Just shall live by Faith: He comes here in this Chapter largely to declare and shew unto them what saving Faith is: And this is laid down in the five first verses of this Chapter. As, First, It is the substance of things hoped for: the evidence of things not seen; a means to obtain a good Report. Through faith we embrace the truth of God contained in the Word, as the Creation of the World by the Word of God. By Faith, and by faith alone our Sacrifices, our Services, our Duties, our Persons, and Performances are accepted in Jesus Christ. By Faith we receive whatsoever we ask of God in Prayer, Matthew 21. 22. And without Faith (in the sixth verse you see) it is impossible to please God. And from the seventh verse to the end of the Chapter, he sets down the several Fruits and Effects of Faith in all Ages, by the most eminent Examples of Gods Faithful Servants.

I shall not now trouble you with the several particular examples of Faith, recorded in the Chapter, but shall leave them to your own particular meditation as you find them recorded in the Chapter, and consider what is there said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things, 2 Tim. 2. 3.

Now that which I intend chiefly to insist upon, is that eminent Example of the Faith of Moses, in the words before mentioned, in that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches, than all the honours of Egypt.

Before I come to the Observations which flow from hence, give me leave a little to look back into the two foregoing verses, wherein we have first the Example of the eminent Faith of Moses's Parents, who contrary to the Kings Command refused to destroy him; the King he Commanded all the Males to be slain, but they being strong in Faith, by hiding of him, did

preserve him; and when they could hide him no longer, they chose rather to trust him to the mercy of God, by casting him upon the Water, rather than to endanger his life by the hands of mercilesse and bloody men. And this they did as the Apostle here saith, Not fearing the Kings Commandment. There are several Useful and Profitable Instructions which may be deduced from hence. I shall only name them, and so proceed.

And the first is this, that God takes special notice of his Peoples Faith; he Records it to all posterity.

Secondly I observe from hence, that it is a very great mercy to be born of Faithful and Believing Parents: Had not Moses Parents been faithful and believing, Moses might have been destroyed as well as others were.

Thirdly, I note from hence, that God can and will preserve his People, maugre all the Rage and Malice of the Devil and all his Instruments. The Enemies of Gods People may design evil against them, but the Lord preserves them; When Men are as it were

were at their wits end, and know not which way to fly for Succour, then doth God know how to Deliver them. Though the Afflictions of Gods People are many, yet out of them all will God Deliver them, Psalm 34. and the 19 verse.

Fourthly, I note from hence, that it is Lawful to disobey the Wicked, and Unlawful Commands of Lawful Authority. If Kings Command that which God (who is the King of Kings) forbids; we ought rather to Obey God than Men: Instances of this Truth we have many in Scripture. Memorable is that unparallel'd Example of the three Children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the third Chapter of Daniel, when Nebuchadnezzar the King Commanded all to fall down and Worship his Golden Image, or else to be cast into the Fiery Furnace, they stoutly did resist, knowing that God was able to deliver them. Be it known to thee O King, we will not Serve thy gods. If they Obeyed not the King, then they must expect nothing but to be cast into the Burning Fiery Furnace;

nace: But this they feared not, they took no care to answer the King in this matter, they knew God was able to deliver them; however they resolved whether deliverance came or not, they would rather suffer than sin. If it be so that we must be cast into the Furnace, we know our God is able to deliver us; but if not, though we be not delivered, yet be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden Image that thou hast set up. The King he threatens a burning fiery Furnace, Alas, that's very dreadful, very terrible to flesh and blood, but what is the fire of men to the everlasting fire of God? Mens Fire that can only consume a poor rotten Carkass, but the Fire of God that is unquenchable, and will destroy both Body and Soul. Men can only kill the Body, and after that they can do no more; but God can destroy both Body and Soul, and that for evermore.

Excellent was that Holy Saying of that Holy Man of God, the Blessed Martyr, Polycarp, St. John's Disciple, when the Emperour threatned him with Fire

Fire if he would not forsake Christ: Alas, saith he, you threaten me with your Fire, Alas, what a poor inconsiderable thing is your Fire! You do not, saith he, consider that everlasting Fire which God threatens. So likewise the Holy Apostles of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the 4th of the Acts, the 18 and 19 Verses, when the Rulers commanded them not to Preach in the Name of Jesus, they answered and said, Whether it be right in the Sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. God commands his Ministers to Preach the Gospel, and Ministers ought to preach the Gospel, notwithstanding the Commands of Men to the contrary.

And so in the 25th of the Acts, Verse 29. when the Apostles were brought before the High-Priests and Council, and by them Questioned for doing their Duty, namely for Preaching the Gospel; you will find in the 29 verse, That St. Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than Men. And after that when

when they were beaten, and Commanded not to preach any more in the Name of Jesus, What did the Apostles do, did they Obey? No; They rejoyced that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of Christ. And as you may see in the last verse of that Chapter, That daily in the Temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.

Several other Instances I might give you, but I proceed. In the next place, the next thing considerable is the Eminency of Moses's Faith, in the 24, 25, 26. verses. By Faith *Moses* when he was come to years refused to be called the Son of *Pharaohs* Daughter: where by the way observe, That it is more honour to be a Christian, than to be a Courtier. It is more honourable to be the Son of God by Grace and Adoption, than to be the Son of the greatest Monarch or Emperour in the World. There is none so nobly descended in all the World as the People of God, they are of the Blood Royal of Heaven: Others they may take their Pedegree from Kings, and Monarchs, and the great ones of

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the world; but the People of God are all deſcended from him who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, the bleſſed and only Potentate, 1 Timothy 6. 15. Yea the People of God are all of them Kings and Prieſts unto God, Revelations 1. 9.

Here likewiſe we might obſerve what low thoughts Chriſtians ought to have of every thing, be it never ſo Honourable, in Compariſon of Jeſus Chriſt. It had been an Honour, yea an exceeding great Honour, if we may account Worldly Greatneſs an Honour, for Moſes to have been reputed the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter, but how inconſiderable a thing was this in the Eyes of Moſes, who was more Nobly deſcended, being born of God, a choſen Servant of Jeſus Chriſt, to go in and out before his People Iſrael: But I proceed.

Now the eminency of Moſes's Faith you may ſee in theſe following Particulars: First, Moſes here ſees the various Difficulties and Dangers which were then like to fall upon him for his faith.

Faith. Will Moses forsake Pharaoh; and embrace Jesus Christ? then Moses must suffer Affliction: This Moses foresees, and this makes his Faith more Glorious. As the People of God are by Faith assured of Christ, so likewise being once in Christ, they are sure to bear the Cross of Christ: Christ and his Cross are inseparable: All that will live Godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution, 2 Timothy 3. 11. See what our Blessed Saviour saith in the Gospel of Saint Luke, If any man will come after me, that is, If any man will be a good Christian, let him deny himself and take up his Cross daily and follow me, Luke 9. 23. He that will follow Christ must bear the Cross as the Blessed Apostles did, they rejoyced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. And truly the People of God may well rejoyce in their Sufferings; for why, Christ hath born the brunt of all, he hath made our Burden light: Although Christ by his Sufferings hath not freed the People of God from Sufferings, yet he hath made their Sufferings to become easie.

Just

Just as it is with a man carrying a great Tree on his Back, and you may see little Children to bear up the small Twigs of the Tree; Alas, there is no weight in them, the weight of all the whole Burthen lies on the mans Shoulders: So Beloved, it is with Christians, Christ carries the Load, the weight of all their Afflictions; they do but bear up the little end, the small twigs of it; therefore the Apostle excellently calls his Afflictions light: Our light affliction, saith he, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

Secondly, the Eminency of Moses's Faith appears also in this; Namely, the great willingness and forwardness of Moses, in that it is said, He chose rather to suffer affliction with the People: which intimates unto us, the readiness of Moses to become the Servant of Jesus Christ. Certainly this was a very great Act of Faith in Moses, a Carnal eye would rather have chosen to have been the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter, an Eye of sense which sees no

no better, would rather have chosen Greatness and Eminency in the World, than the Meanness and Poverty of Gods People: rather to have been Pharaoh's Grand-child, and Honourable at Court, than to have been the poor afflicted Sons of God. Carnal men whose God is their wealth, and whose hearts are set upon their Riches, would rather chuse to be Rich with Dives, than to be poor with Lazarus; but a Gracious Soul had rather want Bread with Lazarus, than to want Grace with Dives. It is not all the Riches in the World that can content and satisfie the Soul of a Saint; a few will see it better for him, if God sees it good for him, to beg his Bread with poor Lazarus on earth, than to beg his Water with Rich Dives in Hell.

A Godly Man by Faith sees that Glory which is to come, they know, that when this Earthly Tabernacle of theirs shall be dissolved, that they have a building with God in Heaven, an inheritance which is uncorruptible and undefiled: which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them who do believe: But a wick-

wicked man he sees only by an eye of sense, he sees no farther than his Riches; he thinks if he may be great and honourable here in the World, he esteems this the only Happiness, and he thinks nothing better than to be Rich: And indeed he may well think so, for he knows of no better Condition. The World with the Honours and Pleasures of it are even a Heaven to the Men of this World; I, and indeed it is all the Heaven they shall have. Son remember (saith Abraham to Dives in the 16. of St. Luke) that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things. Dives would very fain have enjoyed Heaven after his Death, and yet he would live upon Earth in such a Sumptuous Delicious manner, as if this World had been his only Heaven: And true it is, the portion of a Wicked man is, in this Life. God gives wicked men their Portion in this Life, but he reserves a portion for his Saints in the Life to come. Wicked men are very like to some prodigal Spend-thrifts, who spend all their portion before they come to Years, but the portion of

Gods People is reserved for them till they come to age. God sees it good, yea best for his Children to have their Portions reserved for them till they come to Years, and that is till they come to Heaven. He gives his people as much of the world as may serve to bear their Charges to Heaven: But their full Portion he reserves for them till they come to Heaven. And truly the Portion of a Child of God is very great.

God is the portion of his People, and believe it God will never see his People want so long as he hath it: And Gods Treasure is inexhaustible, it can never be drawn dry: All things are yours (saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. 3. 21.) speaking to the Believing Corinthians) whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the World, or Life, or Death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christs, and Christ is Gods.

Having thus briefly run over the words, I come now to give the practical Observations which flow from hence for our edification.

And

And first of all, I observe from hence the transcendent excellency of saving faith, by faith Moses did thus, and thus.

Secondly, I note from hence, that the condition of Gods Children in this life is an afflicted condition.

Thirdly, I observe likewise from hence, that the people of God should rather suffer any affliction, than commit the least sin; it is better to suffer than sin.

And then fourthly, I observe hence, the great vanity of sinful pleasures, they are but for a season.

Fifthly, I observe, that the reproaches of Christ are better; yea, as the Text sweetly expresses it, are greater Riches than all the Honours of the World.

And then lastly, I observe from hence, that God hath a recompence of reward for his people, he will make them amends for all their losses at the last: He that looseth any thing for Christ, shall be no looser by the bargain: Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands,

for my name sake shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting Life, Mat. 19. 29.

Before I proceed to Application, I shall a little open and confirm these several Truths by way of Doctrinal Explication: And to begin with the First, viz. That Faith is a most transcendent, excellent, and saving Grace; and this you may see all along this whole Chapter. First it brings the People of God into a good Report. By Faith our Services become acceptable in the Sight of God. And without faith it is impossible to please God: For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. By faith, Noah being warned of God, prepared the Ark, to the saving of his House, and thereby became an Heir of Righteousness. By faith Abraham forsook his Country, for by faith he saw the Heavenly City which God had prepared for him. And all along the whole Chapter you may see the excellency of Faith in the several Effects of it in the Faithful Saints and Servants of God, who of all others, best deserve the name of Worthies: Who

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through Faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of Lyons, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the Sword. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, sawn asunder, were tempted, slain with the Sword: They wandred about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented. These all obtained a good report through faith. By faith the sick are healed, Luke 7. 50. By faith the People of God are purified, justified, and by faith are they saved, Rom. 5. 1. Ephes. 2. 8. By faith we have access to God by prayer, Rom. 5. 2. By faith we believe the word of God, & they that by faith do believe in God, shall at the last receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their precious souls, 1 Pet. 1. 9.

In the next place to come to the second point, which is this, That the Condition of Gods Children in this life is an afflicted condition: God had but one Son without sin, but God hath ne-

never a Son without affliction. Our blessed Saviour himself was not free from afflictions; nay, He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; he was oppressed and he was afflicted, Isa. 53. 3, 7. The Prophets they were afflicted, and imprisoned, and slain. Likewise the Apostles and Primitive Christians, as you may see at large in this Chapter where my Text is, Heb. 11. They were stoned, sawn asunder, cruelly scourged and imprisoned: Yea, as the Psalmist saith, Many are the afflictions of the Righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all, Psal. 34. 19. Our Saviour tells his Disciples what they must look for in the World at his departure from them: If the world hate you (saith our Saviour, John 17. 18, 19.) ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the Servant is not greater than his Lord:

If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you, and all these things will they do unto you for my names sake. Yea, saith the Holy Apostle St. Paul, reckoning up his manifold persecutions in 2 Tim. 3. 12. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecutions. Many more Scriptures I might give you for the confirmation of this excellent truth, but these I hope may suffice, this being a Truth which the people of God in all ages have born testimony unto with their blood. Nay, this truth is so clear, that it even may be read by the light of these fires in which the Saints of God suffered death, those glorious fires which ever burn fresh in the memory of Gods people, even those fiery Chariots which carried our heavenly Elijahs, our blessed martyrs to heaven.

In the third place, the third Observation to be considered is this; That the people of God should rather suffer any affliction than sin. This you may see in Joseph, who rather than he would commit folly with his Mistris,

rather than sin against God, he would run the hazard of all Afflictions. How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God, Gen. 32. 9. And this truth is most eminently confirmed by Holy Job, who rather than he would curse God and dye, would willingly with patience undergo all his Afflictions. Job underwent all afflictions, and it is said of him, In all this *Job* sinned not. Let God afflict, saith Job, I will suffer with patience: It is the Lord, let him do what he pleases: my afflictions shall never move me to forsake my God. Though God afflict me all the days of my life, yet will I wait with patience till my change come. And in the thirteenth Chapter he resolves, though God should kill him, yet he would trust in him. So likewise we find an eminent example for this in Holy Daniel, as you may read, Dan. 6. 14, 15, 16. Daniel rather than he would sin against God in ceasing to call upon God by Prayer, would suffer himself to be cast into the Lyons Den. So likewise the three Children in the third Chapter of Daniel, rather than they

they would sin against God, by worshipping Nebuchadnezzar's golden Image, would undergo the furious flames of his burning fiery furnace. So the blessed Apostles, as you heard before, rather than they would obey the wicked Commands of men, in not preaching the Gospel, willingly rejoyced in suffering Affliction for so doing. Many more examples I might give you, but these I hope may suffice: and if there had been no other example than what is set down in the words of the Text, this heavenly Truth had been sufficiently confirmed.

In the fourth place, I come to prove the vanity of all sinful Pleasures, and that may appear, First, from the shortness of them; and secondly, from the bitterness of their end. They are but for a season, they come to an end; nay they shall end in endless woe and misery. Though Sin be sweet for the present, yet it is bitter, yea, bitterness it self in the latter end. Though Sin may be pleasant for a Season, yet remember, I beseech you, it will be painful to eternity. The pleasures of

sin

sin they have an end, but the pains and torments which sin procures, they have no end. When sinners have undergone the wrath of God ten thousand times ten thousand millions of years, yet then are their torments as far off from having an end, as they were at first. The torments for sin are eternal, and I beseech you remember eternity hath no end: what pleasure then can there be in that which brings eternal pains with it? Sinners even when they delight themselves in their sins, even then are they pulling destruction upon themselves, even eternal destruction. Every step in sin, how sweet, how delightful soever it be in the eyes of the sinner, is a step to misery, to eternal misery. They that hasten to sin, hasten to sorrow; yea, they run to Hell: As Solomon saith, They love death; he doth not mean that sinners love death, as Death; there is no beauty or amiableness at all in death simply considered in it self; but yet they may be truly said to love death who love sin, and delight in sin, and live in sin. The wages of

sin

sin ye know is death, Rom. 6. 23. Delight in sin is a hasting into the Arms of death. Sinners by their delight in sin do as it were woo death, and invite death and the grave, even hell and destruction: So that even Sinners themselves, though now for a while Satan blinds their Eyes, yet at last when it is too too late, they shall be forced to confess and say, That there is neither pleasure nor profit in sin. The Devil makes the Sinner believe that there is a great deal of pleasure and profit in sin; you shall get by it, saith the Devil: But let sinners once truly cast up their accounts, how that eternal damnation will be their Wages, and then let them see what they have gotten by sin. It is possible I confess, that some may say they have gotten hundreds and thousands by it; they have gotten Houses, and Lands, Honour and Esteem among men, pleasure and profit in the world; but what a miserable gain is that which is gotten with the loss of the Soul.

Read that dreadful Scripture in

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St. Matthews Gospel, Mat. 16. 26. and then see if there be any thing gotten by sin: What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Will thy Riches which thou hast gotten by sin, by oppressing the poor, and defrauding thy neighbour, redeem thy soul from death? surely, no. Thou mayest delight thy self in enlarging thy barns, as that rich fool did: But thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, then whose shall they be? There is no loss like the loss of the soul. There is nothing to be gotten by sin; thou mayest lose thy Soul by sin, and lose Heaven by thy sin, and lose the love and favour of God by sin. Sin may pretend pleasure and profit, but surely it brings ruine and destruction.

Those rich men which St. James speaks of, James 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. verses; they thought that Gain which they got by defrauding their Labourers of their Wages to be very sweet: they lived in Pleasures, they enriched themselves by the sweat of other mens labours: but what have they any

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cause to rejoyce in this? No, saith the Apostle, Go to now ye Rich men, weep and howl, for your misery which shall come upon you. They thought to heap up Riches by their injustice and cruelty, but they heaped up only a little fuel for the eternal fire. Dives he thought himself altogether Happy, when he enjoyed the World at will, when he fared deliciously every day; but what did this Profit Dives? Death robs him of all, and he himself is taken away from his sinful Pleasures, and thrown headlong into Eternal Torments: he would enjoy the pleasure of sin while he lived, and now he must undergo the torments of sin for ever.

O consider this you that delight in Sin; Canst thou endure to dwell for ever in the Everlasting burning? If thou canst endure the Wrath of God for ever, if thou art able to stand before the Lord in the Day of his fierce Anger, then take pleasure in Sin: If thou canst prevent God from bringing thee to Judgement, then let thy heart rejoyce in Sin: But if after all thou must

must come to judgement, then take of sin. Do not conceit that Sin to be pleasant whose pains will be eternal: In vain do Men flatter themselves that they may sin and not suffer; did ever any man rebel, and enjoy peace; can any offend God and have his Blessing? Surely no: Sin shall not go unpunished; if men will sin they shall suffer; The soul that sinneth shall die. Sin destroyed the Angels, those Holy Spirits, sin made them unholy Devils. Sin cast Adam out of Paradise. Sin destroyed the old World. Sin consumed Sodom and Gomorrah. Sin brings Wars Plagues, Famine, and destruction upon Nations. Sin ruines our naines, fears our Consciences; and in a word, it destroys body and soul for ever.

And then fifthly, I observed, That the Reproaches of Christ are greater Riches than all the Honours of the World. The Best of Gods Saints have been reproached, as Holy Job, and David was not only reproached, but was a Reproach both to his Enemies and to his Neighbours: He was

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made the Song of the Drunkards. The Apostles they were also reproached, but here is that which sweetens all, Christ hath born the brunt of all: Christ accounts all our Reproaches to be his. The greatest part of Christs Suffering for us was to bear our reproach: So the greatest part of our Sufferings is to bear the reproach of Christ. Hence the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, exhorts us To go forth unto him, bearing his reproach, Heb. 13. 13. And indeed reproach in it self is so great a burthen, that were it not for this, that Christ accounts it his, we should never be able to bear it. Hence Moses looked on his reproach as the reproach of Christ; and believe me, though there may be a great deal of weight in the reproaches of Christ, to press us down, yet there is abundance of worth in them to enrich us: though they may be as thorns here, yet they should be as a crown of glory to us hereafter.

See What our Saviour saith in Matthew 5. 11, 12. Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs

theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsly for my sake, rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Christ doth not say, If ye be rich and honourable in the world you shall be blessed: but Christ saith, If thou art reproached thou shalt be blessed. Thou mayest be rich and honourable in the world, and yet be Everlastingly miserable: But if thou art reproached for Christ, thou shalt be Rewarded with Christ; If we suffer with him, we shall also Reign with him, 2 Tim. 2. 12.

Sirthly, and lastly, I Observe from hence, That God hath a Recompence of Reward for his People. If we Suffer with Christ, we shall also Reign with Christ: If we be reproached with Christ here, we shall be Rewarded with Christ hereafter. See what our Blessed Saviour saith, Matthew 19. 29. Every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children,

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dren, or friends, for my sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit Eternal Life.

I might be longer on this point, but I proceed to the Uses which shall flow from hence for our edification. And the First Use is this, Is it so then, that Faith is such an excellent grace, then let me exhort you all, in the Name of Christ, to Believe, to get Faith. Beloved, Faith is not only excellent in it self, but it will also make you Excellent: The Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour, Prov. 15. 26. Believers were the only excellent persons in whom David delighted, Psalm 16. 3. Without faith it is impossible to please God, Hebrews 11. 6. For whatsoever is not of faith, is Sin; and God cannot be pleased with Sin. In a word, if ever you would be Saved, get Faith, for without Faith there is no Salvation: It is unbelief which is the Soul-damning sin. He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. The Sentence of damnation is already past against all unbelievers.

bers. He that believeth not is condemned already, John 3. 18. He that believeth on the Son hath Everlasting Life, and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see Life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, John 3. 36. For the Lords sake Sinners believe, if you have any regard to your own good believe; if you have any love or pitty to your precious souls believe; if you would not be eternally miserable, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be eternally blessed.

Secondly, If it is so that the Condition of Gods Children in this Life is an afflicted Condition, what then shall the Condition of wicked men be in the Life to come? If judgement thus begin at the house of God, what then shall be the end of Sinners? If the Righteous be thus scarcely saved, where then shall the Sinner and Ungodly appear? If God be thus severe to his Children, how Terrible will he then be to his Enemies? If through so many Tribulations the People of God enter into Heaven, then into what

what Woful miseries do Sinners plunge themselves into for a few sinful Pleasures: for a few seeming sinful Pleasures, they heap to themselves eternal Torments. O consider this you that forget God. In this Life the People of God are afflicted, but in the Life to come they shall be rewarded. Lazarus he was Afflicted with Hunger and Sores, yea scorned and contemned by Dives; but in the Life to come Lazarus is rewarded, but Dives is tormented. The time will come when Gods People shall have Pleasures, Everlasting Pleasures, when the Wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the Nations that forget God, Psalm 9. 17. The Lord trieth the righteous, (saith David) but the Wicked and him that loveth violence his Soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, this shall be the portion of their cup, Psalm 11. 6.

Thirdly, Is it better to suffer than to sin, then this may inform us of the great evil of Apostasie; they that will turn from the truth rather than

suffer for the Truth, such I say, never did embrace the Truth in the love of it; they went out from us, but they were not of us. Many will own Christ and the Word of Christ when they may do it without Fear, but when troubles and persecutions come, then they fall away. But whosoever they are that in this Case go about to save their Lives shall lose them: They that deny Christ for fear of Persecution, Christ will deny them before his Father. Apostasie was the Sin of the Devil, and they that Apostatize from Christ for fear of persecution, shall have the Devils Reward. Thou wilt not Suffer for Christ, but Christ will make thee Suffer Eternally. Thou thinkest life is sweet, and indeed so it is, but remember Eternal Life is much more sweet, and the Soul is more Precious than Life. Christ laid down his Life to save Souls, therefore Christians should lay down Ten Thousand Lives, if it were possible to have so many, rather than lose their Souls. By apostatie from the truth thou may-

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eſt ſave thy life, but in ſo doing thou loſeſt thy ſoul, which is of more value than ten thouſand lives. Did Chriſt lay down his life for us, and ſhall not we much more lay down our lives for him? Did Chriſt who is the Prince of life become obedient unto death, even the death of the Croſs for us, then let nothing ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt.

Chriſtians ſhould ſhew themſelves to be the ſervants of Chriſt by afflictions, Perſecutions: be the way what it will, fair or foul, thick or thin, Chriſtians ſhould perſevere: The Apoſtles loved not their lives unto the death in the cauſe of Chriſt: and he that is afraid of his life in the cauſe of Chriſt, is ſurely afraid of Heaven. If he that endures to the end ſhall be ſaved, then certainly he that falls away ſhall be damned. If we fear them who can only kill the body, more than God who is able to deſtroy both ſoul and body in hell, what will become of us? In a word, let me encourage you all in the words of the holy Ghoſt, as you may find

it, Revel. 3. 10. what saith God there? Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer, behold, the Devil shall cast some of you into prison that you may be tryed, and you shall have tribulation ten days: But be thou faithful unto Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.

Fourthly, Is it so, that all sinful Pleasures are short and vain, are they but for a Season? then I note from hence by way of Use, the great folly of Sinners in neglecting Eternal Life for a few momentary Pleasures. Sinners spend their Time in gathering Pebbles, and yet they trample upon Pearls. How many grievous Sinners are there, who with that wretched Cardinal are ready to say; They will not loose their part in *Paris*, for their parts in Paradise. Sinners had rather loose Heaven than part with their Sins; as if they could enjoy the Pleasure of Sin for ever, never considering how soon Death may come upon them, and turn all their pleasures into pains. Sinners are apt to flatter themselves in their own

folly,

folly, and to fancy that they shall live for ever, or at least-wise that they may enjoy their Pleasures till death come, and yet go to Heaven: It is true, God suffers many to go on in their sins, and never awakes their Souls at all; but this he doth in judgement. Sinners despise Christ now, but Christ hereafter will despise Sinners: They who say unto God depart now, we will have none of the Fear of the Lord; God will say unto them, Depart ye Cursed hereafter. When death comes, Sinners must bid farewel to all their pleasures; they rejoyce in their Worldly Pleasures here, but when death comes, farewel Pleasures; not one laughter more, then never another jovial meeting, then no more ranting and singing, then all pleasures will be turned into pains.

Consider, I beseech you Sinners, will your pleasures profit you in the Day of Wrath? surely no; they may torment you as they did Dives. How many are there now in Hell, who had as much Pleasure as thou canst have?

who had as many merry meetings, as much dyning, and Sporting, and other sinful Pastimes as thou hast had: Oh, but what pleasure is it now to them to think on those things for which they are now tormented: The Lord awaken every secure sinner: For the Lords sake be not such fools as to damn your souls for such trifles as these are, which are not only vanity, but perdition of Spirit also, even horrour and dread to all eternity.

Fifthly, Is it so, that the reproaches of Christ are greater riches than all the honours in the world, then I observe from hence, that a Crown of Life is more worthy than all the Crowns and Kingdoms in the World. Moses he looked upon Pharaohs Crown, and he sees that to be fading and tottering; but Moses he looks upon the Crown of Life, and sees that to be Everlasting. Kings by the permission of God, for the sins of a Nation, may be deprived of their Earthly Crowns, as by sad experience we have found in this Kingdom; but the Crown of Life which God shall give

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his People is beyond the reach either of Men or Devils to deprive them of: God shall give it them, and none shall be Able to take it from them. there shall be no Usurpers in Heaven to Rob Gods People of their Crowns; There shall be no petitioning nor Remonstrating against the Saints in Heaven: The Devil who is now their accuser shall then be thrown down into the bottomless Pit. The Saints Crown shall not be voted useless and dangerous in Heaven: God may for our Sins suffer high Courts of Justice here to take away the Lives of Kings, but it is beyond the Power and Policy, either of them or Devils, to take away Eternal Life from the People of God. Hereafter they are kept by the mighty Power of God through faith unto Salvation. Men may take away the Life of a Saint, but this now takes not away their Crown. Your Joy no man taketh from you, saith our Saviour, John 16. 22. Men cannot deprive the People of God of their joy here, and certainly therefore neither men nor

Devils

devils can take away their eternal joy, which shall be without sorrow, and without ceasing, even for ever to all eternity.

Sixthly, Is it so, that the Reproaches of Christ are such great Riches: yea, greater Riches than all the honours of the world; how great then are the Rewards of Christ: If Christ crucified be so lovely, how unspeakable lovely then is Christ in Glory: If the Saints be so glorious here under Reproaches, how glorious then shall they be in heaven, when Christ himself shall put his glory upon them: If the people of God are so glorious here, what shall they be when they come to their Kingdom, where they shall be cloathed with the glorious white Robes of Christ: For when Christ who is our Life shall appear, (saith the Apostle) we shall also appear with him in glory. At the day of judgement, O how glorious shall the people of God then appear: they shall have Crowns upon their Heads, yea, they shall be cloathed with Glory, and honour, immortality, and life eternal for ever, Rom. 2. 7.

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Seventhly, Is it so then that God hath a Recompence of Reward for his people hereafter? then let me exhort you all to make choice of the Lord for your God: they that make choice of the Lord for their God here, shall be sure to have him for their reward hereafter. It was a good resolution that of Joshua, as you may read, Josh. 24. 15. As for me and my house we will serve the Lord. Let the men of the world run after Idols, and Inventions of their own fancies, a Child of God, a Joshua, he will worship God in spirit and in truth. And if ever we would be rewarded with Christ, then let us chuse Christ, and the Ways of Christ. Labour to grow in Grace, and to abound in holiness, for Godliness is the way to Glory. Godliness (saith the Apostle) is great gain. Godliness hath the promise, not only of this Life, but of the life to come. Were the ways of God never so hard and difficult, yet they have a Glorious Reward: Godliness brings the best gain, eternal life and glory. Wouldst thou in the Day of Judgement chuse Heaven rather than Hell,

Well, then chuse God and walk in his ways, embrace Holiness although it be never so much despised by prophane sinners, if ever thou wouldst be imbraced by Christ in Heaven.

Eightly, is it so, that there is such a glorious reward for the People of God, then let us live and dye as becomes the Heirs of Glory: Let us then walk worthy of God (as the Apostle saith, 1 Thes. 2. 12.) that hath called us to his Kingdom and Glory. Is it so, that the Saints of God shall shine as the Stars in Heaven, then let the People of God labour to shine as lights in the World. If thy inheritance be in Heaven, then let thy Conversation be in Heaven: If your Reward, your Treasure be there, then let your hearts be there also. Is thy Name written in Heaven, let the world see it then in the Legible Character of Holiness. Think of that Crown of Glory which thou shalt Everlastingly enjoy in Heaven: and then so live, that thou mayest be in a readiness to receive it. Get Oyl in your Lamps, grace in your Souls, that when Christ who is your

Life,

Life, shall appear, ye also may appear with him in glory; receiving the end of your Faith, even the Salvation of your Souls.

Lastly, Is there such a Reward for the People of God hereafter, then be content with what God gives thee in this Life: be thy portion what it will, if Heaven be thine, thou hast that which is better than all the World; they that have Christ for their portion have no want. The Lord is my portion (saith David, Psalm 23. 1.) therefore I shall not want. Saint Paul accounted all things but dross and dung in comparison of Christ. Remember, it is better to be poor and godly, than rich and miserable: Riches never made one soul happy, they have made many a soul miserable. Let the People of God then take off their Affections from the World: It becomes not the Heirs of Glory to look after such trifles, it is enough for Swine to be rooting in the Earth; Children who are fed at their Fathers Table will neber regard the bones that are thrown to the Dogs; they that are daily fed

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with the fat things of grace and glory, should never regard the vain and transitory things of the world. The glory of this world is but the portion of a reprobate; take them at the best they are but uncertain, here to day, and gone to morrow; they may be destroyed by Fire, they may be stolen away by Thieves: Thou mayest lay up treasures here, and when thou hast done all, they may be consumed by rust and moths. Therefore take St. Paul's counsel, and set your affections on things that are above, and not on things below: Let your conversation then be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have, for God hath said, I will never leave you nor forsake you, Heb. 13. 5. So to conclude, I beseech you fear the Lord all ye his Saints, for there is no want to them that fear him.

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